

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson*****Federal Protective Service: Would Federalization of Guards Improve Security at Critical Facilities?***

April 14, 2010 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the full Committee hearing entitled “Federal Protective Service: Would Federalization of Guards Improve Security at Critical Facilities?”:

“Since 2007, this committee has held three hearings on the Federal Protective Service. This small agency is a prime example of the kind of changes this nation has undergone in the last 10 years.

Once primarily concerned about protecting federal buildings from theft, vandalism and other minor crimes, the mission of FPS changed significantly after September 11th.

This small agency of 1,200 employees must protect Federal employees stationed in 9,000 Federal buildings and countless members of the public seeking information or assistance. Their vigilance must match our vulnerability.

They carry out this task every day. But they cannot do it alone.

These 1,200 FPS employees are supplemented by 15,000 security guards who are paid by private firms under contract with the government. Every year, the cost of those contracts increases by about 20%.

For most people, the contract guards are the face of the Federal Protective Service. Unfortunately, that face has some disturbing features. In three years, this committee’s oversight has uncovered:

- FPS’s failure to pay its contractors;
- Security firms hired by FPS who failed to pay their guards;
- FPS failure to require current and appropriate credentials for guards;
- FPS and the security companies’ failure to properly train guards; and
- FPS’ inability to mandate that Federal tenants comply with security upgrades;

These problems have led to security vulnerabilities that allowed GAO testers to enter federal buildings guarded by contract guards with knives and guns.

To be fair, FPS has tried to respond to each problem uncovered and each challenge revealed by the GAO, the Inspector General or this Committee. DHS has put forward a transition plan to help resolve some of FPS’ problems.

But this cascade of issues pushes us to ask whether additional piecemeal patches will be sufficient.

The solution to these problems will require resources, planning and commitment.

In July 2009, the Office of Management and Budget directed each agency to consider the use of federal employees in positions held by contractors. The Homeland Security Department identified about 3,200 contractor jobs that will be converted to federal positions.

Despite numerous reports of security vulnerabilities and the likelihood that federal facilities may present attractive targets, none of the 15,000 positions held by FPS contract guards were considered for insourcing.

Increased threats on federal employees and recent attacks on federal buildings demonstrate that safety of federal facilities can no longer be taken for granted."

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